



Being vegan: the domestic animal disappears with its purpose

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The vegan diet has been in vogue in recent years. Some prefer the vegan diet for ethical reasons, because they do not want to kill animals (Allegrì 2022), others because in their opinion the vegan diet is healthier for the human body (Craig 2009), and the third category for reasons of environmental protection (Kortetmäki & Oksanen 2021).

We do not wish to discuss here the question of benefits or harms to human health of the vegan diet, as there is no ideal diet for all human beings (Craig 2009). Some athletes or people who want to lose weight need a high protein intake, simultaneously with a caloric deficit that could not be found in a vegan diet (in which carbohydrates and fats predominate), while gout sufferers are only allowed to consume very little protein (so, meat is contraindicated). Because each individual is unique, has certain health problems, nutritional deficiencies, preferences, pleasures, or nutritional needs, no diet is perfect for all people. Therefore, we cannot generalize. So, discussing this topic is pointless.

The purpose of this short opinion is the discussion surrounding the saving of animals and the protection of the environment through the adoption of the vegan diet by humans (a topic also debated by other authors, e.g. Kortetmäki & Oksanen 2021). Also, animal protein lovers who believe that the suppression of traditional animal husbandry has a beneficial effect on the environment embrace the idea of replacing meat with synthetic meat (Fernández 2021) and insect-based food (Petrescu-Mag et al 2022). This discussion makes sense to be debated here on the grounds that consumers do not see the problem of eliminating meat as a whole and the long-term effects. Let's see what it would mean to completely give up the consumption of meat from domestic animals.

Many horse breeds disappeared (Riezykova 2022; Szczygielska 2022) with the advent of mechanization and road transport. Among them we list: Abaco Barb, Charentais, Narragansett Pacer, Navarrin, Norfolk Trotter, Old English Black, Syrian Wild Ass, Turcoman. These are some examples of horse breeds that have disappeared forever. In addition, dozens of other breeds and varieties of horses are doomed to extinction due to the extremely small number of remaining individuals and their lack of usefulness for human activities. Due to the fact that it is expensive, there are too few who breed horses just for beauty, with no other use. Once down to such a small number of individuals, breeds go through a bottleneck stage, followed by genetic drift, which radically changes the original characteristics of the breed by chance. Also, the bottle neck period can end with the extinction of the breed.

In this case of the extinction of horse breeds, we cannot blame mechanization and transport for the extinction of the breeds. It was a natural evolution of the development of human society.

Let's return to the reduction of meat consumption, which is promoted by European policy intentions in order to decarbonize the atmosphere. It is obvious that the gradual

reduction and replacement of meat can eventually lead to the elimination of meat consumption and the suppression of animal husbandry. Animal husbandry cannot exist without consumers of meat, milk, dairy products, and eggs. To rely exclusively on the conservation of animal resources through the animal husbandry of animals bred for beauty and pet shops is utopian. Once meat becomes a marginal food in importance, either by law or custom, animal farms will disappear and the meat-eating niche will be usurped by the producers of computer-engineered, lab-grown synthetic tissue culture meats that use minimum human resource. Thus, the peasant farmer will be eliminated from the equation, becoming, from the producer, a simple consumer (Figure 1).

Animal husbandry is not only a source of food for society, but also jobs, rural traditions, culinary habits and a way of life. A good part of these would disappear if livestock were not allowed, and the peasant farmer would be uprooted from his own way of life, from his own culture and from his own values.



Figure 1. Beef production without farmers (Spahich (2022), www.the-scientist.com).

The farmer is presented with the alternative of raising insects as a solution to continue his animal husbandry. This technical solution is ridiculous and can only be thought of by a bureaucrat who has never lived in the countryside. It is beyond the comprehension of the law-making bureaucrat that the peasant will never raise insects, and never so much deal with tissue cultures. The peasant does not own the technical infrastructure and has neither the necessary training (specific knowledge), nor the concerns by tradition, interest, nor the financial potential to buy the patent for the technical project of insect production. The peasant, at least the peasant in Eastern Europe, is a conservative spirit. He is not culturally concerned with raising insects, regardless of the profit such a venture would bring.

The culinary transformations proposed to society by the European political class are about to exterminate classic animal husbandry and subsistence agriculture. The producer would become totally dependent on the technique to produce animal protein for the consumer. The consumer in the rural area had, until now, the option of purchasing products of animal origin and the alternative of subsistence production (own traditional resources or exchange with other rural producers). Following the upcoming European policies, the consumer would only be left with the possibility of purchasing those products available on the market and approved as sustainable by European policies.

In a vegan world, animals would not be happy animals, but animals would be extinct. The solution for animals to live in welfare is extensive agriculture (more precisely, extensive animal husbandry). This alternative gives domestic animals a longer

life, lived in an environment very close to the freedom of the wild, but with added safety and disease healing for the animal, provided by the farmer.

Extensive animal husbandry could not provide the necessary protein for the entire human society, and this is where the usefulness and importance of diversifying food through insect-based foods, synthetic meat, fishing, game, vegetable proteins, amino acids produced by synthesis, etc. comes into play. In our view, in the distant future, meat should not be eliminated from the human diet, but supplemented by diversification. Realistically speaking, domestic animals destined for other than human consumption or companionship have little chance of sharing a happy future with humans. Although this danger of breed extinction is not yet imminent, the extinction of animal breeds would mean the careless erasure of 8000 years of empirical selection and genetic improvement of animals (Perkins 1969; Jing & Flad 2002). It would all start with the misperception that "human's vegan diet saves animals". Does it save animals?

Conflicts of interest. Authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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